

Stakes Race Recap



CHURCHILL DOWNS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Contact: Darren Rogers
Senior Director, Communications & Media Services
Churchill Downs Racetrack
(502) 636-4461 (office)
(502) 345-1030 (mobile)
Darren.Rogers@KyDerby.com

VERTICAL OAK CHANGES TACTICS TO WIN OPEN MIND

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Saturday, Sept. 15, 2018) – J. Kirk and Judy Robison's **Vertical Oak**, sent to post as the even-money favorite, overcame early adversity and rallied late to run down **AstrollinthePark** in deep stretch to win Saturday's 10th running of the \$100,000 Open Mind (Listed) for fillies and mares at Churchill Downs by three-quarters of a length.

Trained by **Steve Asmussen** and ridden by **Ricardo Santana Jr.**, **Vertical Oak** clocked six furlongs on a fast track in 1:10.16 to give the trainer and jockey their third win together in the race. Previously, they won the Open Mind with **Vuitton** (2013) and **Aireofdistinction** (2014).

Breaking from post position 3 in the field of seven fillies and mares, **Vertical Oak** was unexpectedly out-footed at the break as **Courtmeewithcarats** shot to the front with **Miss Kentucky** tracking in second, **Our Majesty** trying to keep up and **AstrollinthePark** stalking from the outside. **Vertical Oak** was shuffled back to sixth as **Miss Kentucky** and **AstrollinthePark** closed to draw even with the leader on the far turn, who clocked an opening furlong in :21.74. After a half-mile in :45.70, **AstrollinthePark** spurted clear at the top of the stretch but **Vertical Oak**, who swung to the outside to commence a late run, rolled in the lane to just get up inside the final 100 yards.

The victory was worth \$60,760 and increased **Vertical Oak's** earnings to \$630,030 with a record of 7-3-3 from 18 starts. **Vertical Oak** is a Kentucky-bred daughter of **Giant Oak** out of the Pollard's Vision mare **Vertical Vision**, and was bred by Millennium Farms.

Vertical Oak rewarded her backers with mutuels of \$4.20, \$2.60 and \$2.20. **AstrollinthePark**, ridden by **Gabriel Saez**, returned \$3.20 and \$2.80 as the 2-1 second betting choice with 15-1 outsider **P Boo** finishing third 4 ¼ lengths back under **Jack Gilligan** and paying \$5 to show.

It was another neck back to **Thirteen Songs**, who was followed in order by **Courtmeewithcarats**, 3-1 third betting choice **Miss Kentucky** and **Our Majesty**.

This was **Vertical Oak's** fifth career stakes win. Her most notable triumph came in last year's Prioress (Grade II) at Saratoga. In her most recent start, **Vertical Oak** finished second to **Finley'sluckycharm** in Saratoga's Honorable Miss (GII) on July 25.

Saturday's race saluted the late **Eugene Klein's** Hall of Fame filly **Open Mind**, the **D. Wayne Lukas**-trained winner of the 1988 Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies (GI) at Churchill Downs who returned to the Louisville track the following spring to win the Kentucky Oaks. The New Jersey-bred filly was an Eclipse Award champion at ages two and three. A winner of 12 races and \$1,844,372 in 19 starts, the daughter of Deputy Minister was enshrined in Racing's Hall of Fame in 2011.

OPEN MIND QUOTES

Ricardo Santana Jr., jockey of VERTICAL OAK (winner): "I thought there would be a lot of speed in this race today. So, Steve and I talked and said to break from the gate and see what happens. I had all the confidence in the world in my filly that she would be okay coming from off the pace."

Steve Asmussen, trainer of VERTICAL OAK (winner): "She really showed some maturity today. We've tried to get along with her all along but she's always been a bit headstrong. It's very nice to see her be able to rate behind horses as she did today."

Gabriel Saez, jockey of ASTROLLINTHEPARK (runner-up): "She ran a nice race. It was disappointing not to get the win but she tried hard."

-END-